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The Implosion of Modernity

Jonathan Friedman

Tribalism

For the past couple of decades, the notion of tribalism has been banned from social science usage, not least in anthropology. It was considered to smack of colonial ideology, one that had been designed to characterize colonized people as primitive. This was precisely in the period of formation of African and other post-colonial elites when modernization was seemingly as unproblematic as it was necessary, or even natural, the identity of the new leaders who opposed themselves to any hint of a tribal past. Suddenly the notion of tribe has returned with a vengeance, not primarily in Africa, but rather as a general description of the contemporary process of fragmentation in the world system.

»If it is undeniably true that the world economy is becoming increasingly integrated, it is similarly a fact that populations throughout the world are retreating into tribalism of an exclusionary, often violent nature.« (Horsman and Marshall 1994: 177)

While it is not a simple matter to speak of the increasing integration of the world economy, it is evident that the establishment and defense of sub-national state entities has begun to reach epidemic proportions.

The nature of the economic process is better characterized in terms of the following:

1. There is a rapid decentralization of capital accumulation in territorial terms.
2. There is some evidence of increasing centralization of capital accumulation on a world scale, but this is very partial and limited to certain areas. The centralization that has occurred is related to financial hierarchy and portfolio holdings rather than specific industries.
3. The rate of transactions in the world economy has certainly increased, especi-

ally with the emergence of world wide electronically organized movements of credit.

4. Whether or not the periodicity of business and longer cycles has decreased is not clear, but it appears that in the long run there is a decrease in the length of hegemony in the system.
5. There has been a deepening of capitalization in the sense that increasingly larger sectors of social life have become commoditized. The public sector has been increasingly privatized, and the public sphere of civil society has been increasingly penetrated by new forms of commodification

The logic of the supposed globalization process lies essentially in what has been characterized as time-space compression. Credit, services, information, and products circulate more quickly. This implies increasing sensitivity on the part of capital to the most minute changes in conditions of profitability and capitalization and consequently more rapid movements of capital in and out of particular places. Such mobility in and of itself represents a potential threat to any state dependent on a stable and predictable tax base. On the other hand, there are clearly trends in the medium run, at least, which are themselves products of the maintenance of stable conditions of investment. Thus, East Asia has for a couple of decades been a major attractor of global capital, a tendency that seems to be continuing. The cycles of accumulation and decentralization have not disappeared, but they might be argued to be more volatile today. The boom-bust cycle that literally eliminated overcapitalized capital in the past via crashes and depressions, is now increasingly monitored and controlled by state institutions, but this often amounts to using tax money to ride out potentially major crises, such as the massive refinancing that occurred in the 1980s' savings and loan failures in which upwards of 20% of the United States' institutions were more or less bankrupt. This process is directly related to the process of capital decentralization which has led to increasing liquidity problems in the former central states of the system. The same process is the root of the economic crisis of the Western welfare states. Stratification is increasing, while the richest 1% of the population has increased its share of the total wealth in relation to the bottom. Downward mobility has become a major topic of research and terms like »underclass« are today common fare in describing the inner city ghettos in the United States and now increasingly in Europe. Horsman and Marshall remark that the U.S. so well known for its hyphenated identities has begun to falter in this area as well as others:

»In multicultural societies such as the U.S. there has long been a tradition of hyphenated citizens – Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans and so on. But the strength of U.S. Na-

tionalism lay in its ability to turn its immigrants into citizens in seemingly effortless fashion. In recent years that facility has faltered. The weakening ties between citizens and government have provoked growing frustration and encouraged people to look locally for comfort. In most large cities ›looking locally‹ involves a retreat into one or another of urban America's ethnic enclaves.« (Horsman and Marshall 1994:180)

Their diagnosis is related directly to the globalization process itself, i.e. that increasing localism is a response to the loss of both economic and cultural control entailed by globalization itself. In the view presented here localism is partially a response to globalization, but the latter is itself part of the decentralization process that weakens the nation state and simultaneously provides possibilities for fragmentation in the system as a whole. In other words, the current fragmentation is not part and parcel of world development in which globalization is a kind of final phase. On the contrary, it is part of the real fragmentation of the hegemonic order of the world, the decentralization of capital accumulation as well, and following from this, the decentralization of claims to sovereignty.

Is there any evidence for consolidation on a global scale? It has recurrently been suggested that the European Union is a typical example of centralization rather than fragmentation. It is true that there is a major effort in Europe to establish the continent as a superpower, for some even a United States of Europe. Few, however, accept this goal and instead there is a great deal of bickering concerning national rights to fish, subsidies and representative languages. The European Union is indeed a volatile entity that risks breaking apart. But from a global point of view the consolidation of Europe, if it occurs, is itself part of a larger fragmentation. No longer is there a single hegemony or a First World/Second World opposition. Rather there is a division into three trade blocks that were formerly hierarchically related in center/periphery structures. The European Union faces the American NAFTA and the Asian Union. We have moved from a globally hegemonic centralization to a competition between regional blocks, themselves fraught with internal frictions.

It is clearly a misnomer to simply apply the notion of tribalism to situation better characterized by fragmentation and the ensuing formation of local sodalities, be they based on ethnicity, indigenous identity, gender, or even class. All of these phenomena are aspects of the breakdown in the global system, rather than a response to capitalism's development. In the following I shall try to elaborate the nature of this process.

The Treacherous Present: A Report from 1992

The 1992 celebration of Columbus' discovery of the New World in 1492, has rapidly become very much of a celebration of the non-western, local and ethnic fragmentation of the system the emergence of which is symbolized by the voyages of discovery.

This is fast becoming the year and perhaps the decade of the North, Central, and South American Indian, the Hawaiian, the Australian Aborigine, the Micronesian etc. In Hawaii, where I have done fieldwork, there is today a strong movement for the re-establishment of the Hawaiian Nation as a politically autonomous entity in a tourist saturated State where Hawaiians had virtually disappeared under the weight of economic, political and »cultural« Americanization. On the mainland (U.S.), there is a powerful movement on university campuses for the elimination of standard courses in western civilization. Such courses are being forced out of university curricula in many states while being supplemented or quite simply supplanted by courses in non-western culture and society.

In Canada, enormous land tracts – however barren – are being returned to Indian tribal councils. Discussions are presently underway regarding whether the Maori of New Zealand are to regain a large portion of that island state for their own

This is the year of »Dancing-with-wolves«. Kevin Costner thanked all his Indian Brothers publically at the Academy Awards, to the cheers of the audience. The Lakota speaking Indians, some of whom were involved with making the film are today trying to build up their buffalo herds so as to become economically self-sufficient and thereby independent of the United States.

And at this very moment there is a Swedish parallel. Sweden often described as the most homogeneous Western country has begun to discover the competing claims to sovereignty within its heretofore calm borders. The indigenous peoples of the country have burst onto the Television screen with a powerful narrative of the situation of the Sami, a potential »nation« within the larger nation State. This most unlikely occurrence in a nation identified as »homogeneous«, has been accompanied by a slew of new regionalisms and a state policy of multiculturalism.

When the issue of minority rights on American campuses was first taken up in Sweden a half year ago, it was assumed by many that this could never happen in Europe, certainly not in Sweden. It ought to be evident now that ethnic conflict has attained violent proportions at home as well.

This world wide emergence of indigenous movements has received official

global recognition in the UN declaration that 1993 is to be the year of the indigenous peoples.

At the same time, as we said above, and in parallel with the above process, there has been an enormous increase in the number of fundamentalist religious movements, ethnic nationalisms, and local warfare in the seams of a weakening world order.

This process has been instrumental in the ethnification of large immigrant populations throughout the major centers of the global system.

In order to understand what is occurring here it is necessary to gain a perspective on the situation as a global phenomenon. Sub-nationalisms, ethnicities, the emergence of indigenous movements are all parts of a process that includes the fragmentation of the Soviet Empire as well as Western hegemony into more locally based sodalities with strong cultural identities seeking autonomy from the larger realms of which they were previously parts. It is important to note that while old imperial structures are breaking up others, in Asia, are in the process of formation and expansion. This latter shift in accumulation to East Asia has led to the emergence of new modernisms, in forms such as neo-Confucianism. This major transformation of the global order includes the emergence of global financial and political classes as well as a widespread displacement and impoverishment of large populations.

Cultural identity is the most general term that can be used to describe the welter of phenomena that confront us. The term refers to a social identity that is based on a specific cultural configuration of a conscious nature. History, language, race are all possible bases for cultural identity and they are all socially constructed realities. This does not make them false or ideological, if we recognize the degree to which all identity is constructed. Identity is only false for those who have none or feel alienated enough from any particular identity that they could never dream of participating in such quasi-religious mystification. But very many have, from being extremely modern and cynical with respect to ethnicity, returned to ethnic roots with a vengeance. It is as absurd as it is dangerous to deny the authenticity of cultural identity as a powerful phenomenon. There are three linked processes of cultural identification at work in the current situation:

1. Immigrants in the West are gaining in strength of identity at the same time as their hosts are becoming more ethnic themselves, leading to direct confrontations described as racism.
2. Indigenous peoples living on the margins of national states, i.e. Sami, American Indians, Maori, South and Southeast Asian tribal minorities, are finding

their rights to land and both political and cultural autonomy on the agenda of the UN.

3. Older ethnic subdivisions in Europe both West and East are coming to life once more. A process that has been going on in Western Europe – Bretagne, Occitanie, Lombardy, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Catalonia, Basque country, Corsica for almost a decade has been overshadowed in the media by the ethnic explosion occurring with the dismemberment of the empire to the East.

Ethnification is a global process and not a mere coincidence. It is not about the network of communication via TV, although the latter plays a role. Nor is it merely about multicultural state policies, although such policies have been instrumental in the reification and sometimes the very creation of ethnicities among immigrants. It is far broader and more powerful, for it informs and even forms the multicultural ideologies that have grown so powerful in the West, just as it works from the bottom up in the igniting and politicization of cultural identities among minorities of immigrants, sub-national regions, and indigenous peoples. It is about the decline of hegemony, about the disintegration of the center's model of identity, modernism, and the global proliferation of identities locally rooted and apparently impervious to conditions of mobility in the larger social arena. I say apparently because ethnic consolidation also entails the formation of new elites – leaders and representatives of the new groups who may easily be integrated into the cocktail-partly syndrome of the new international political and economic class via the enormous amounts of liquid capital and tax money in circulation in the midst of oceans of abject poverty.

There has been a great deal of discussion of what is called globalization. Some have equated it with cultural homogenization via some form of western technological imperialism. The whole world watches Dallas (less so nowadays in the US), drinks Coke and Pepsi, wears T-shirts with the same designs and produced in the same sweat shops representing Acapulco, Rio, Waikiki, or Mauritius, Gucci clones as well as IBM and even Mac clones. This, of course, has not produced homogeneity but has supplied raw materials for new local variations. There are also conscious mixtures as in World Music, but these forms are never experienced in terms of their global significance. The discussion of globalization itself is sometimes overdrawn by intellectual elites in the west who have finally realized that such global phenomena exist. It is true that the decentralization of capital accumulation and the multinationalization process have fostered a globalization of products, services, and even classes that is probably unprecedented in quantitative terms. But what is not often realized is that global processes, including

cultural transfers such as spaghetti, medical systems, science, mathematics, clothing, etc. have been around for a very long time and are essential elements of world history since the first commercial civilizations of the Old World. Similarly and more importantly, the phenomena with which we are so involved today have occurred innumerable times in the past, brought on by similar processes. Both the integration of large portions of the world's populations into imperial systems and their hegemonic cultures and the subsequent disintegration of hegemony and its cultural fragmentation, experienced as local renaissance in declining empires, are age old, often violent phenomena. Globalization is not so much about changes in the movement of people and things as about the way such relatively constant phenomena are *identified* by participants in the world system in particular periods.

This is a situation that many experience as deadly dangerous, as a threat to ongoing existence, but that others experience as a liberation, as an opportunity for cultural expression that had previously been suppressed. The thin line between balkanization and cultural renaissance is the principle characteristic of the contemporary situation, but a situation embedded in a world in economic and political crisis. It might be argued that the image offered here of the decline of Western hegemony is overdrawn in some respects, since there is certainly no loss of its military power in the world today. In fact, some would claim that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States or perhaps the West as a whole had achieved total hegemony. This is clearly expressed in the Gulf War, the enormous and increasing power of certain American and European multinational corporations, and the apparently successful manipulation of the local by the globally reaching corporations with regard to consumption of both goods and images. It is true that the U.S. has been more active in certain international military operations over the past several years, being unopposed by the crumbling Eastern Block. But this must be seen in the perspective of a disintegrating hegemonic situation. New or expanding international hierarchies have not been established. On the contrary, and in spite of the exercise of combined U.S.-U.N. military might, the fragmentation is continuing, in the Middle East, in Southern Europe, in East Africa. The decentralization of the arms trade is an excellent indicator of this process. In the model that we have proposed, the decline of hegemony takes the form of increased multinationalism, especially economic. Thus the power of the multinational media and other economic concerns is not a counter argument but an expression of the phenomena that we are discussing. This power, however, is not of the classical political type, and it may only be as long-lived as this particular phase of the cycle.

The Emergence and Decline of Modernity as an Identity Space

The structure of modernity as an identity space is the foundation for any understanding of the present state of affairs. The dominant structure of this space is modernism, predicated on the disintegration of former holistic structures of identity in which the subject was integrated in a larger field of structured forces that were constitutive of selfhood. It is in modernity that the self is separated from these larger cosmological structures. This is a modernity that has surely emerged in previous commercial civilizations but which in our own era appears in the 18th century, with the breakdown of the older ascriptive hierarchies of aristocratic Europe. It is expressed in a number of parallel processes:

1. The first commercial revolution was very much based on the freeing of appearance from fixed status, so that anyone theoretically could appear as a baroness, a king or a butcher. And the complaints of this century are rife with just such an anarchy of identification. Lord Chesterfield writes to his son warning him not to present his whole self in public, but to keep a private sphere, a growing necessity when no one knows really where one is coming from.
2. The coffee house becomes the arena where people whose background and social position is not clearly marked can interact. It is a place where alternate identities can be practiced and where ascription is replaced by achievement. It creates the stage where there is no longer a univocal relation between self and social identity.
3. The theater becomes freed of its previous function as circus and becomes a true scene for the representation of plays, dominated by an increasingly professionalized corps of actors. The theater is where the new not quite socially defined crowds could go and experience other experiences than their own. They could experiment in otherness in this way. Descriptions of the period recount the extreme emotional engagement of audiences in such spectacles.
4. The novel appears as a popular form of culture. Reading was at first limited to the public arena. Novels were read aloud and it was considered incorrect at first to read privately. Ultimately the novel became the outlet of private fantasy. One could engage oneself entirely in another life. This is again an experiment in alterity, but it is more extreme than the theater in the possibilities it affords the subject.

Modernity is fundamentally the emergence of »alterity« as a permanent situation, where the self is never defined, where there are always other possibilities of identity and existence. This is a world in which the private becomes the real and

the public the artificial or constructed, in which the notion of civilization is equivalent to artifice. The word *negligee* was first used to refer to all apparel worn in the privacy of the home, *negligee* because natural, non-constructed. The opposition between the private and the public took on its specific form in this period.

Alterity, in its turn, implies that the social self is neither natural, necessary, nor ascribed. Rather it is achieved, developed, constructed. Alterity, thus harbors a tendency to change, to »develop« it might be said. Combined with the principle of trial and error, alterity yields progress, or evolution: Going on, learning more, becoming better, more efficient, more intelligent and informed, or whatever. Here we have the key to what might be called modernism. Goethe's *Faust Part II* contains the essence of the strategy of modernism, the principle of movement in and for itself. *Faust* combines the anguish of being alone with the driving desire to move on to greater heights. The cosmology of modernism is evolutionism. The cosmology of the previous holism is best expressed in the notion of the »great chain of being« a universal hierarchy stretching from God through the angels, to man, to animals and, finally, to the devil, a hierarchy in which every separate form of existence has its established place. Now if one were to take such a hierarchy and turn it on its end, making it into a horizontal chain called time's arrow, one would have transformed the great chain of being into an evolutionary scheme. Evolution is essentially the result of the temporalization of the »great chain of being«. It occurs when biological and social position in the world are no longer definable in terms of relative nearness to God. This transformation is also a temporalization of space. That which is »out there«, from reptiles to apes (Rousseau was convinced that recently discovered apes were in fact humans that had been disqualified by an act of racism), from the bushmen to the Inca, were forerunners of the modern and civilized state of the world, i.e. back then.

This notion of modernism may seem strange to the art historian or the self-conscious artist. But the notion of modern that I have intimated here is not so foreign to modernism in art as might be assumed. The separation of the subject from his or her social expression, the emergence of a private sphere, the »real me«, are fundamental, as I have suggested, to the modernist position. The latter is associated with the bohemian, the revolution of style, the self-sufficiency and inner directedness, that negates the existent order, in order to move beyond. Now while, modernism in art, as a specific form, cannot be understood in such terms, the impulse to forge a modernist art form is clearly related to the more general modernist approach to life. The constant breaking with convention, the abstraction of form from content, in art, music, and poetry are all parts of a single movement. And it is strikingly parallel to the separation of person from role in

the formation of Durkheim's sociology, i.e. the »social fact«; the abstraction of the arbitrary linguistic sign in the work of Saussure and the foundation of modern linguistics, the abstraction of the psyche from the biological-physiological substrate of the human being in psychoanalysis. This across-the-board transformation in European identity cannot be taken as mere coincidence. It corresponds to other major changes: the *gemeinschaft/gesellschaft* debate, Proustian nostalgia, Mann's Buddenbrooks tale of the decline of traditional values, and Kafka's frightening images of the future of power. All of this tumultuous explosion of modernism is a powerful expression of the separation of subject from socially determinate meaning that began more than a century earlier. The outcome is the empty subject, capable of anything yet satisfied with nothing, the »long distance runner« of modernity.

Modernism is the dominant form of the modern, but it is dependent on an external context. There must be a belief in the future. There must be some place to go, just as there is a past from which we have come. Now all of this development was very much an outcome of the expansion of the West from the end of the 14th century. The expansion consisted in:

1. The exploration and domination of large parts of the globe and the integration of the latter into the emergent European center, i.e. the formation of peripheries.

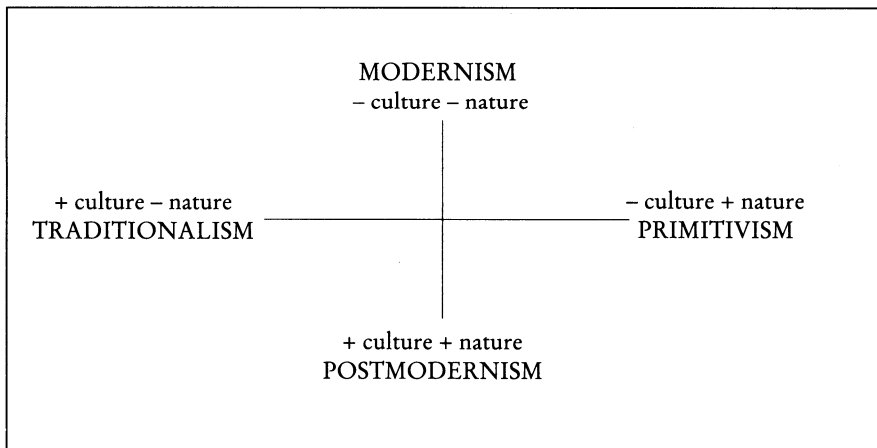
Most often this transformation entails the disintegration of the previous political and social structures of the new peripheries and/or their adaptation to peripheral status.

2. The commercialization and industrial transformation of the center itself, the emergence of the »workshop« of the world complex, in which the center becomes the major supplier of consumption goods for the larger world.
3. The disintegration of previous »traditional« life forms in the center, increasing individualization, urbanization, experienced as both liberation and alienation.

This is the formation of hegemonic center/periphery structures that characterize the social and economic field of the modern era. The global system is not new. Western hegemony is the continuation of a former Middle Eastern system via a shift in hegemony and not something that grew out of the soil of Europe. Modernism is dependent upon real expansion in order to maintain itself as a strategy. It craves a future. It needs mobility, both individual and social. Where the economic and political conditions for modernism are weakened, modernism itself enters a crisis. The future disappears along with mobility. Development appears more like disaster and there begins a search for alternative identities. The

current crisis of the modern world system is a crisis of accumulation in the center which is the product of the decentralization of wealth accumulation in the system as a whole. Multinationalization, capital export, the consequent generation of new industrial zones are the result of the increasing wealth of the center which has made it too expensive as a producer relative to its own underdeveloped periphery. Decentralization is the way in which capital solves the problem of competition, i.e. by relocating production in the most efficient way possible, i.e. to areas of cheap labor, lower taxes, and more lucrative financial conditions. Meanwhile capital in the center is increasingly relocated to various forms of fictitious accumulation, speculation in land, in other people and countries' debts, in stocks and bonds. Included in this speculation are the so-called culture industries; from pop culture to the enormous speculation in works of art and non-art.

Figure 1: The identity space of modernity



It is in such crises that modernism comes under attack. If we consider the above figure as an ideal typical model of modern identity space, then we can begin to consider the kinds of reactions that are occurring in the contemporary situation. The modernism just described can be reduced to an identification that is opposed to both nature: libidinous, infantile, and disgusting; and culture: superstition, and traditional autocracy. Traditionalism, the most common reaction to

modernism, is pro-culture in the sense of traditional authority and order, established codes of meaning, and values; and anti-nature understood as the lack of control, as a world of anarchic self-indulgence, a »pornotopia«. Primitivism is pro-nature, understood as creativity, innocence, and honest intimacy, and opposed to culture, understood as power, and authority in the name of tradition, the imprisonment of creativity. Postmodernism, finally, is both pro-culture and pro-nature, seen respectively in terms of traditional wisdom and human creativity. It is opposed only to the opposite of these, scientific knowledge (or pretensions to knowledge) and the dominance of rationality. In periods of crisis, there is a four way polarization in this space, with a statistical tendency toward a predominance of traditionalism. Traditionalism is expressed in the desire for roots, the ethnification of the world, the rise of the fourth world, the return to religion and stable values. Primitivism is primarily expressed in a more aggressive rejection of civilization; often among those who are increasingly marginalized, but also in the media and the arts, popular as well as the more rarefied and sophisticated. The »urban Indians« who have occupied uninhabited tenements in the cities of Europe, music celebrating the primitive, even black magic, devil and witch cults all explore the repressed zones of Western identity. Postmodernism is primarily an intellectual identity that defines itself in opposition to the rational-scientific core of modernity and seeks new meaning in both the libido and traditional cultures.

Now while the three reactions to modernism do not appear on the surface to have anything in common with the latter, I would argue that they are all part of the same space of potential identification. They are, in fact, contained within modernist identity, as that which is specifically repressed. It is this logic that produces the equation of the wild man within and the primitive in the periphery. The margins of the person, that which is overcome by socialization is identical to the margins of the civilized world »out there« which has been superceded by social development. The crisis of western hegemony is the crisis of modernism, the implosion of modern identity space. The primitive has begun to close in upon us, both from within and without. It can be expressed as simply as the need for cultural roots.

»I would like to be a member of a group that is living a culture, like on an American Indian reservation, or a gypsy encampment...or an Italian neighborhood. Where there is some meat to the culture. Mine was very wishy-washy. There was not much to make it strong and appealing. It was just supposed to be this thin little rod in the back of my spine. Scotch Irish. It was thin. It was diluted. I would like to be in a rich cultural society. I don't know which one it would be. Whichever one is the richest...Where they have a tight familial structure of aunts and uncles and cousins. And they all know their second

cousins intimately and they are all involved in each other's lives. Which didn't happen to me. Although cousins lived nearby, we weren't tight. We didn't know if they were in town. We were just not as aware of them as I think other ethnic groups are, the ones that are rich and the ones that are tight. It could be Alaskan Eskimo. I mean, I am on my own here. I don't have that many friends. I do my work. I play my instrument. I travel a lot. But I don't have a big cultural... People who have stayed where they grew up have a larger cultural... Well, I don't even have it at home, where my mother lives. It has just not been there for me, ever.« (Waters 1990:152)

The decline in modernism in the center is accompanied by the fragmentation of identities. The population of North American Indians increased from 700,000 in 1970 to almost 1,500,000 in 1980. This is not a fact of biology but of identity. There are five new tribes as well. Thus the longing for roots is rapidly fulfilled by their proliferation in the wake of the decline of modernism. There has been a renaissance of cultural identities in the past decade that is truly remarkable. The dehegemonization of the world has led, at least temporarily, to its dehomogenization. In one sense this can be appreciated as an exhilarating liberation of cultural difference, a veritable symphony of human variation. This has been the reaction of certain anthropologists and of the museologically oriented public. But there are deeper issues involved here, not least of which is the fact that cultural identity is not a mere game for those engaged in it, but a deadly serious strategy of psychic and social survival. Cultural identity in its ethnic form is not a mere question of lifestyle, here today, gone tomorrow. The latter is expressive of the view of the typical modernist who can and must maintain a distance to all potential identities which can, in the end, never be satisfactory. On the contrary, ethnic identity is a matter of sacrificing the self to a greater social project.

Recreating identity is an exploration of the very foundations of human experience and it can easily become entangled in the powerful emotions of the primary narcissistic world in which the self leads a precarious existence indeed. The notion of rebirth is not at all out of place in describing such processes. It is not, then, a mere question of culture, but of the engagement of the self in projects of social selfhood that cannot easily be controlled.

The position of the Western intellectual in all of this is that of the cosmopolitan observer of the active creation of cultural identifications. Moving between continents and ways of life, often in exile, often among others, in a world of diasporas, an identity that may strive to encompass all this variation and apparent mixture may form. This is an identity predicated on changing forms of access to the world more than in changes in the world itself; an insecure modernism without roots. Diasporas, cultural mixture, movements of peoples, etc. are not new, but they have not always been cognized in the same way. Today the media

have joined in accentuating the consciousness of the fragmentary state of the world as well as the intensity of the interconnections among its parts. Music, television, and literature with the prefix »world-« are becoming everyday fare for global consumers. There has been an accentuation of global representations, most often the work of the new cosmopolitan elites and intermediaries, and, needless to say, a central element in their identity as well as a claim to power.

Disorder and Postmodernism

Modernism as the dominant figure of hegemonic power in the global system, orders the world in a hierarchy of developmental stages. It orders the public sphere according to the dictates of civilizational authority. While it does not really homogenize the world, its pretensions in that direction generate a more or less hierarchy that is the essence of evolutionary thought. The decline of hegemonic centrality is simultaneously the rebirth of cultural autonomies, a general liberation of formerly contained and encompassed identities. The breakup of modernity is the dissolution of its principles of organization. The individualist component of modernity, the separation of the subject from any particular identity is also the autonomization of the activity of understanding as a public discourse and consequent capacity to replace one complex of propositions about the world with another. This paradigm is purified in Popperian and related models of scientific praxis and the evolution of theory. It relies ultimately on the separation of the individual theory maker from the product of his activity, even if this is rarely attained other than in certain of the natural sciences. What becomes clear in the crisis of modernity is the degree to which scientific activity is a social project and not a natural faculty or self-evident procedure for the production of truth. The dissolution of the rational-scientific paradigm is the breakdown of the public sphere of scientific activity, the arena of theory and falsification, of the evolution of knowledge. In its place is substituted, wisdom, edifying conversation, and a pluralism of cultural worlds, a complete relativization of possible world proposing discourses. If there is disorder here it is the lack of any principle of order connecting propositions and discourses, i.e. the absence of criteria of discrimination. The criteria of discrimination inherent in the public sphere of modernism rank propositions in terms of truth value. But these criteria also ensure the replacement of highest ranked propositions by more adequate propositions. Where such criteria are eliminated the formerly ranked space is flattened out and its voices take on equal value with respect to one another. This proliferation of

potential voices is thus parallel to the proliferation of identities referred to above. Other medicines, holistic wisdoms, other understandings of nature, *gemeinschaften*; all invade the former self-cleansing field of rational thought, and modernist developmentalist identity.

The global connection here relates the crisis of hegemony to the crisis of modernism, its dominant ideology, to the emergence of postmodernism, the fragmentation of the former; its multiculturalization. In terms of representations of science, postmodernism is a relativization of scientific knowledge, internally and externally: internally, a neutralization of the procedure of falsification, and externally, a relativization of scientific knowledge with respect to other forms of knowledge. All knowledge is thus translated into one or another corpus of culturally specific propositions about the world, corpuses that are ultimately incommensurable and for which there are, thus, no criteria of comparison or evaluation.

The disordering of the world can be seen as a systematic fragmentation among a number of parallel processes:

scientific knowledge	incommensurable cultural corpuses
modernist identity	multicultural rooted identity
political and economic hegemony	multicentric politics and economic accumulation
modern ego formation	narcissistic dissolution

The Fragmentation of the Person and the Decline of Modernism

As we have described the emergence of modernity, the establishment of a specific form of individualized experience has been fundamental. It is one in which the body becomes the container of a self-organizing person whose project is in principle disconnected from any larger project, i.e. a state in the body. The project of this individualized person is crystallized in modernism itself, the essence of continuous movement and self-development. It is a fragile identity, constructed on the principle of alienation from all that has been previously attained, on the always-felt possibility of being other than what one is at present. It is thus predicated on the absolute separation of self from social identity. This can only be overcome, as Dumont has suggested, by the practice of cultural ascription, which in modernity can only take the form of an essentializing racism. I shall argue here that the essentializing of personhood need not take the form of explicit racism or biological reductionism. In fact, both the latter as well

as other forms of ascriptive identification are generated when the ego structure is threatened with dissolution, i.e. where the support mechanisms of modern existence fail.

The logic which we have outlined above is one that leads from de-hegemonization at the global level, to economic decline in the center. This is followed by a dissolution of the modernist project and a crisis of personhood in general, the advent of depression, as the world no longer conforms to the subject's structure of desire. Ultimately there ensues an unbearable »depressive overload« (Alberoni 1984:52-83) that threatens psychic survival. It is in this state that clinical narcissism looms large, a situation in which the person becomes increasingly dependent upon the »gaze of the other« to ensure his/her very existence. In such states, a number of solutions appear:

1. The narcissistic state can become relatively stable, however conflict-filled.
2. Depression can turn into despair and mental collapse. This is also a tendency in the above situation.
3. The nascent state: psychic salvation by means of submitting oneself to a larger project, »greater than oneself«. This is the core of Alberoni's »Falling in Love« and of his view of social movements in general (Alberoni 1984).

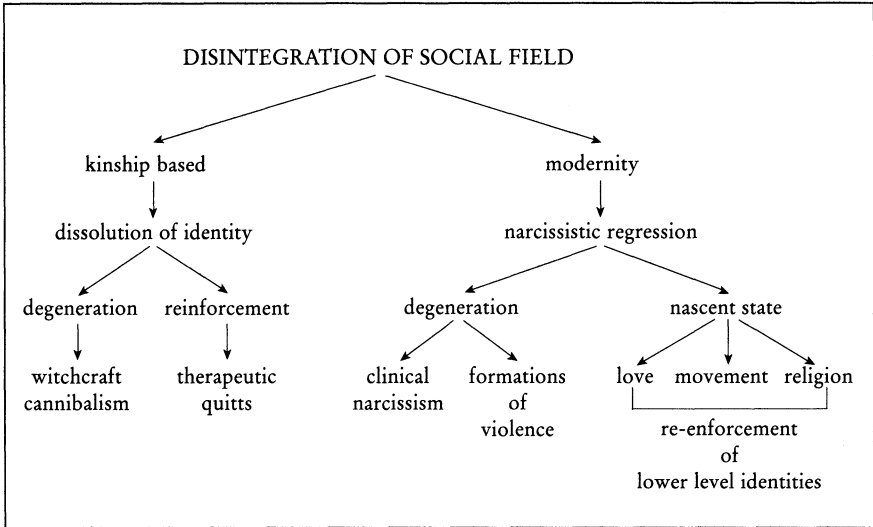
Alberoni's notion of the nascent state describes an equivalent of the »non-modern« person (see below), a subject whose project is a mere aspect of a larger social project whose experience is narcissism inverted in the sense that dependency is replaced by a total identification with the gaze of the other. A central aspect of emergent new social identities is their movement-like qualities or their religious nature, the existential engagement of the individual subject in the larger social project. This is clearly crucial for an understanding of the aggressively balkanized identities that have recently developed in the decline of the Soviet empire, for their intensive elaboration of histories and sacrifices made for »the people«. It is equally important for any understanding of the explosive growth of fundamentalism, for the strongly religious core of many Fourth World movements and for the centrality of holism in their self-construction. It also helps to account for the simultaneous intensification of ethnicity among immigrants and nationalism among host populations.

The fragmentation of the subject has been a pervasive theme in discussions of postmodernity. Frederick Jameson has made use of Lacan's discussion of schizophrenia to characterize the postmodern condition of the subject, described as a breakdown in the signifying chain. Signifiers become concrete entities of experience rather than bearers of meaning. In this situation, the subject loses his bearings, the symbolic underpinnings of identity. While Jameson makes use of Lacan's

discussion of signification to gain an entry into developments in literature and the arts, it might be noted that another interpretation can illuminate the entire question of the experience of fragmentation which is central in the current discussion. In this interpretation, narcissistic degeneration refers to a situation in which the subject loses his »ego«, so to speak, i.e. his personal life-project, and becomes increasingly dependent upon significant others in order to survive existentially. This can be studied the other way round as in the work of Ortigues and Ortigues, *Oedipe Africain*, where the authors detail the degree to which their West African subjects never gain a self-directing project, i.e. never transcend the pre-Oedipal. Here Authority, the Lacanian »nom du père«, always resides in the external field. This does not mean that in such societies no fragmentation can occur, but simply that it occurs in the external field of identification rather than within the subject himself. Let me oversimplify this into two ideal-type situations:

1. Where the self is invested in a broader set of social relations and a matching cosmology, the subject is continuously defined by external gazes elaborated upon by a cosmological discourse. The project of the self is defined external to the body. It resides in the larger social network and its representations. There is a crucial difference between this and modern clinical narcissism, one that is the result of the fact that in the former, personhood is stabilized by the social network and its cosmology, while the clinical narcissist is totally alone in the quest for identity and recognition. In this kind of structure, the weak link in the chain lies not in the person but in the external conditions. Perturbations and crises in the social world imply total crisis for the individual as well. The immediate solution is the reinforcement of the weakened links in the cosmos so as to ensure personal survival.
2. Where the self is invested in its own personal project, one that is located within the confines of the body, the subject is autonomous with respect to the larger social field. This separation of the social from the personal introduces an indeterminacy in the larger relation. Social crises need not imply an automatic fragmentation of the self. Where modernist identity is no longer viable in such crises, narcissistic tendencies are counteracted by means of the formation of new identities rather than in the reinforcement and intensification of the old cosmology.

In the first case crisis may lead to an exacerbation of cult activity, the emergence of cargo cults, witchcraft accusations, »fetishism«. These relations concern the maintenance of a self dependent upon a flow of life-force from the outside, on the stable gaze of the authoritative other. From the perspective of the modern,

Figure 2: *Social disintegration and the self*

this amounts to a reinforcement of a fundamentally narcissistic relation. In the second case, crisis can either lead to narcissistic degeneration or to a re-identification of the subject in a larger project, i.e. via Alberoni's »nascent state«. Here the dependency of the individual is maintained by his willing subordination to a collective project. The re-identification of the subject with the larger project, while eliminating the ego-project and submerging the subject within the dictates of the group, simultaneously provides a new found meaning in life and an ontological security. This relation is the core of movement organization. It consists in the formation of new sodalities where there was previously social disintegration and consequent individual regression. In both of these cases, disorder in the larger social field provokes an attempt to re-establish or create interpersonal unities. These new unities express, and are instruments of, a reorganization of the social field in conditions of modernity, i.e. where individualism prevails. In kinship organized and so-called traditional forms, or, in Dumont's terminology, holistic societies, the social field is not so much reorganized as re-activated, via intensification of rituals, the elaboration of magic, the emergence of new cults; all of which is motivated by a desire to retain that which is disintegrating. Between these two ideal types there are numerous variations. In recent work on the relation of the subject to the Islamic revolution in Iran, Khosrokhavar (1993,

1995) relates the incomplete »modernization« of Iran to the formation of a »quasi-individual« which in turn is linked to the neo-communitarianism represented by an attempt to construct a community in the absence of traditional village society. The tension between a hypermodern consumerist desire and the impossibility of its realization leads to an inversion/negation of modernity in the new political Islam. The latter is an attempt to satisfy the simultaneous and contradictory need for individuality and for communal identity, both of which are unrealizable. The result is a life in which fantasy replaces the real:

»[L]es mouvements effervescents à base de quasi-individus perdent entièrement de vue la rationalité et s'enferme dans un processus de subjectivation qui les détache de la réalité.« (Khosrokhavar 1995:248)

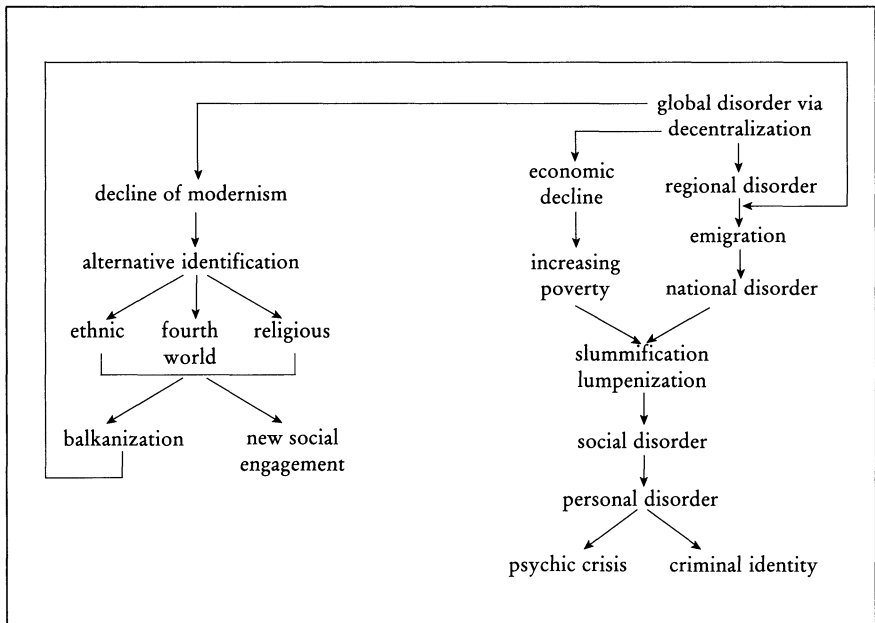
The Process of Disordering and Reordering the Social Field

The process of disordering in global systems is not a question of randomization or of increasing entropy. It is, as we have suggested, a process of decentralization that is quite intensive, even explosive at times, and which harbors a tendency to reorganization or at least the strengthening of social forms at more local levels.¹ The individual subject, his emergent strategies and practices, play a crucial role in understanding this process. It is the subject that sustains the conditions of social disintegration and it is the subject's desire for *self*-maintenance and integration that is the driving force in the process of re-ordering.

Recent work in France, by authors such as Touraine (1992), Dubet (1987), and Bourdieu (1993) have repeatedly stressed the importance of considering the subjective conditions of action. Dubet, in particular, has in a study of the very large relatively new class of marginalized youth in France (1987) demonstrated the ways in which social and personal disintegration are linked to one another and how the latter in its turn produces a specific set of possible courses of action. His work concentrates on the formation of what might be called a culture of violence, a »violence without object«, and the way in which it has stabilized by means of the reproduction of identical conditions of existence over a couple of decades. While this study concentrates essentially on structurally unemployed youth in the de-industrializing North of France, other studies have concentrated on ethnic strategies, the explosive increase in Islamic identity among formerly secularized North Africans. Dubet insists on the non-ethnic character of the youth groupings he has studied, not their trans-ethnic character, but their non-ethnic character. The latter criteria appear to be irrelevant in their self-identifica-

tion. But at the same time and in the same period, the number of mosques in Paris has increased from approximately 10 to over 1000 (Kepel: 1987), and there has been a great deal of alarm concerning a new religious militancy in the country. The recruitment to this emergent re-identification is primarily from the structurally marginalized youth described by Dubet. The two descriptions do not contradict one another, but report different phases or perhaps aspects of the same process of disordering/reordering. A systemic aspect of this process, as we have suggested, is that disorder in a social field may produce increasing order within the components of that field. This is what fragmentation is all about. And from the point of view of the subject it is quite reasonable to assume that re-identification and existential engagement is more satisfactory than continuous desperation and anguish. This process reinforces the fragmentation by generating a set of viable boundaries and projects that become increasingly independent of the projects of the larger system. In formal terms this kind of situation can be likened to a »catastrophe«, a field in which several solutions may reinstate equilibrium, described in theoretical language as points of bifurcation, trifurcation etc.

Figure 3: Global order/disorder in the center of the system



The outlines of the processes discussed here can be represented as in *figure 3*. This diagram refers only to the center of a modern global system in conditions of decentralization and decline. Processes in the peripheral sectors necessarily have a different character to the extent that identity is constructed differently there, thus producing a different set of motives and strategies. If there is a rough similarity in the parallel processes of disorganization, ethnic conflict, religious developments, and balkanization, this has to do with the more general properties of social disorder and even personal disorder. Thus, it has been forcefully argued that what appears as ethnic warfare in Sri Lanka is not founded on the same kinds of strategies as Western ethnic conflict (Kapferer 1988). Kapferer argues that ethnicity is not constructed in the same kinds of terms but is closely related to a self whose identity is bound up with the Buddhist state. Singhalese attack Tamils because of the way they disrupt the hierarchical order of the state, and thus of the individual, whose entire existence is predicated upon the maintenance of the state as a cosmological entity. For Singhalese, cultural identity is not born within the body any more than the individual bears his own personal life project. Both are defined as external to the subject, so that the latter practices a form of selfhood that is an expression of the larger totality. But the fact of identity, i.e. of identifiable people, no matter what the criteria of identification, the experience of fragmentation and of loss of power, desperation and anguish etc. are common to both this situation and to Western modernity. In the West, ethnicity is sustained within the body, defined as a substance that is passed on from one generation to the next, reducible ultimately to the biological concept of race. In such terms it might be argued that ethnicity does not exist as such in South and Southeast Asia. But as a social construction of identity it is highly variable. Migration in and to Europe which has become a mass phenomenon in the past few years is, of course, not new. But in periods of expansion, or at least in periods when modernist identity functions adequately, immigrants are integrated via a process of assimilation or of ranking that places them in one way or another in an unambiguous position. It is only in periods where the hegemony of central identity declines that multi-culturalism emerges, and where, as a consequence, ethnicity, not only of immigrants, but of indigenous populations, regional populations, and national populations becomes salient.

Strange Bedfellows: Tribalism II

One of the stranger results of the articulation of global fragmentation and local identification is the convergence of movements and interests that one would think

ought to be totally opposed to one another. The most spectacular of these is the increasing parallels between nationalist and Fourth World identities. The Boer have applied for membership in the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. The Bushmen were supporters of Apartheid since it afforded them an autonomous space. The New French Right, as it is commonly called, is an extraordinary but quite logical product of the current state of affairs. It is, of course, a minor phenomenon although it has spread to Italy and Germany, and its leaders are sophisticated intellectuals. In a recent issue of the leftist journal *Telos* its editor, Paul Piccone, rightly underscores the similarity of this movement to the old New Left.

Three principles: self-determination, radical democracy (direct), federalism unite the new right with the left [...] a proposal for a more tribal structure [...] and all of this is in opposition to the »Universalizing New Class seeking to impose an abstract liberal agenda on everyone« (Piccone 1995:21).

Benoit makes his differential argument on culture in crystal clear terms:

»A plurality of cultures can coexist without either destroying or absorbing one another only if embodied in organic communities, not merely isolated individuals. In the latter case, the outcome is not only the gradual erasure of cultural particularity but the very decomposition of individuality, which explains the inextricable connection in the US between cultural homogenization through the culture industry, the rise of the therapeutic industry, and the progressive disintegration of communities (16)

»[M]ulticulturalism can thrive within the interventionist liberal state only if it is reduced to the celebration of irrelevant folkloristic, culinary and otherwise merely superficial characteristics.« (15-16)

The New Right opposes the Catholic Church and all Universalizing religion, the nation state, imperialism, the media. It defines itself in terms of a series of oppositions:

paganism vs. monotheism
 difference vs. uniformity
 freedom vs. slavery
 particular vs. universal

Against global universalism and standardization, Benoit states:

»Given this situation, we see reasons for hope only in the affirmation of collective singularities, the spiritual reappropriation of heritages, the clear awareness of roots and specific cultures [...] We are counting on the breakup of the singular model, whether this occurs in the rebirth of regional languages, the affirmation of ethnic minorities or in phenomena as diverse as decolonization [...] whether in the] affirmation of being black, the political pluralism of Third

World countries, the rebirth of a Latin American civilization, the resurgence of an Islamic culture, etc. [...]» (Elements, 33 Feb-Mar 1980, 19-20. In: Telos 119)

This is an expression of what has been referred to by some as differentialist racism, a racism, if that is the right word, that maintains the ideology of collective autonomy, giving up rights to nation state in favor of territory, a policy of gated cultural communities. The parallels with statements of Fourth World movements claiming indigenous autonomy are obvious and they express a deep similarity in the way cultural identities are constructed, the way they invoke the past, the way they oppose the imperial and universalizing Truths of world hegemony to the local, particularist, and even holistic values of the truly traditional and indigenous.

Conclusion: The Twin Peaks of Cultural Fragmentation

Salvation and the euphoria of cultural identity, or death metal and ethnic cleansing: These are not two alternatives that have emerged in the contemporary situation, but two intimately related aspects of the process of re-identification in this age of fragmentation. For those who see in all of this a gigantic process of hybridization I would caution that such a view combines a certain wishful thinking with an entirely external perspective that charts the origins of *things* rather than the actual structures of practice in the world. It is, furthermore, a view of those who can afford such an external perspective; the various, often short-lived, global elites or professionals whose calling it is to represent the state of the world to others. The literature of the diaspora is a literature of conflict, often insurmountable, often bloody. And here too, the trans-national, trans-ethnic, and trans-cultural, are products of intellectual distancing rather than lived experience. The invasion of those forces that are usually held at a distance by modernist identity appears to pervade every aspect of the contemporary condition. This invasion combines a certain exhilaration, the exhilaration of new found meaning, and fear, the fear of the outsider, of treachery and violence. The invasion is not merely geographic, the implosion of »the Other«, but internal as well, the implosion of formerly repressed psychic desires, the surfacing of the other within. It is this process that would appear to underlie, not only the explosive nature of contemporary conflict, but the massive increase of literary, film, and other representations of the combined loss of control of self and others. On the positive side, the exhilaration of violent engagement is, a solution to the fear, and the two terms form a system or unity that is difficult to break without changing the circumstances in

which it develops. When marginalized youth without any hope in the future are offered drugs and arms to engage in mass murder we find ourselves in a world in which interlocking processes spin off viciously positive feedback cycles of violence that take on their own momentum and may even become life styles and cultures. Today's ethnic wars may well be the sporadic eruptions of more generally seething forces in the global arena.

I have sought here to connect processes that occur at the highest levels of global systems to those that occur within individual subjects. I have implied throughout that these different levels are best understood not as separate entities but as properties or aspects of life processes and that the latter are indeed observable. I have also suggested, implicitly perhaps, that any understanding of cultural production and identity formation in the world today is dependent upon insights into the way in which global processes ultimately affect social experience, since it is out of the latter that cultural forms are generated. This kind of perspective is not a mere theoretical problem but one that may, hopefully, throw light on some of our major contemporary problems.

Anmerkung

- 1 The discussion throughout most of this paper concentrates on so-called modern sectors of the global system and is not applicable in the same way to sectors organized on more »holistic« lines.

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